

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 DODE-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 XMB-02
EB-08 OES-07 INR-10 CIAE-00 COME-00 IO-13 SP-02
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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1795
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 2119

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, BG, NP, IN
SUBJECT: SATELLITE SYSTEM FOR METEOROLOGICAL AND HYDROLOGICAL
MONITORING IN BANGLADESH

REF: A) STATE 63095, B) DELHI 4709

1. FOLLOWING ARE EMBASSY/USAID VIEWS ON
PROPOSAL RAISED REFTEL.

2. WE BELIEVE THAT GON WOULD BE AGREEABLE TO SUBJECT PROPOSAL
IN CONTEXT OF EMPHASIS WHICH THIS GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN GIVING
(STARTING WITH KING'S SPEECH AT COLOMBO PLAN MEETING) TO
REGIONAL APPROACH TO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF WATER RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT. NEPALESE ACCEPTANCE WOULD BE CONDITIONED, HOWEVER,
ON SEVERAL FACTORS. MOST IMPORTANT, REQUEST WOULD HAVE TO
COME FROM GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH. THIS IS NOT QUESTION OF
PREFERENCE AS PER PARA 5 REF A, BUT RATHER BANGLADESH
INITIATIVE WOULD BE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF ESTABLISHING REGIONAL
NATURE OF PROJECT. SECOND, WE ARE ASSUMING THAT AUTOMATIC
SENSORS THAT WOULD BE PLACED ON NEPALESE TERRITORY ARE
NOT OF A NATURE TO INTERFERE WITH ANTICIPATED GON ACTIVITIES
IN AREAS SELECTED. ON OTHER SIDE OF EQUATION, WE DO NOT
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SEE GON AS BEING UNDULY CONCERNED WITH EXECUTING AGENCY
FOR PROJECT (E.G. U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS), BUT OUR
PREFERENCE WOULD BE FOR A PRIVATE ENGINEERING FIRM TO DO
THIS WORK. KEY WILL BE BANGLADESH SELLING IT AS EFFORT TO
TACKLE REGIONAL PROBLEM ON REGIONAL BASIS, WITH EXECUTING
AGENCY BEING RELATIVELY MINOR DETAIL. SIMILARLY, ALTHOUGH
GON WOULD DEFINITELY BE MOST PLEASED WITH SOMETHING THAT

COULD BE POINTED TO AS GENUINE THREE-WAY REGIONAL PROJECT, WE DO NOT NECESSARILY SEE INDIAN AGREEMENT AS PRECONDITION TO AGREEMENT HERE. EVEN IF GOI REJECTED PROPOSAL FOR REASONS CITED REF B, THERE WOULD PRESUMABQY BE NO OBJECTIONS IN DELHI IF NEPAL WENT AHEAD WITH WHAT WOULD BECOME IN EFFECT BILATERAL COOPERATIVE EFFORT WITH BANGLADESH. QUESTION REMAINS, OF COURSE, AS TO WHETHER PROJECT IS VIABLE WITHOUT INDIAN PARTICIPATION.

3. WE SHOULD ADD THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE GON'S AGREEMENT TO PROJECT WOULD BE BASED ON ANTICIPATED DIRECT BENEFITS TO NEPAL. ONLY IF SENSORS PLACED SUFFICIENTLY FAR UPSTREAM IN MIDDLE HILLS AREA WOULD READINGS PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DATA OF BENEFIT TO NEPAL. GON ALREADY GETS ITS OWN IMAGERY FROM METEOROLOGICAL SATELLITE AND NOAA HAS JUST COMPLETED INSTALLATION OF NEW EQUIPMENT BRINGING NEPALESE STATION ON LINE WITH TECHNOLOGY OF NEW SATELLITE TO BE LAUNCHED THIS SUMMER. IN SHORT, GON ALREADY ABOTAINS MUCH DATA OF USE LOCALLY. READINGS ON WATER FLOW VOLUMES WHICH MIGHT IMPACE ON LOWER HILLS AND TERAJ WOULD, HOWEVER, BE NEW AND USEFUL ADDITION.

4. FROM USG STANDPOINT, WE READILY CONCUR WITH MERITS OF PROJECT IN ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN TERMS. EVEN IF BEST PLACEMENT OF SENSORS LIMITS DIRECT BENEFITS TO NEPAL, EFFORT HAS OBVIOUS BENEFITS DOWNSTREAM WHICH WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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READILY APPRECIATED HERE. MOREOVER, SUCCESS ON THIS EFFORT COULD HAVE SIDE BENEFITS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE TO NEPAL. SPECIFICALLY WE ANTICIPATE THE USE OF SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY ON A REGIONAL BASIS IN CONNECTION WITH USAID'S RESOURCE CONSERVATION/SOIL EROSION EFFORTS HERE IN NEPAL. AGAIN, STUDIES WILL INVOLVE INDIA AND BANGLADESH AS WELL AS NEPAL, AND BENEFITS WILL IMPACE DOWNSTREAM AS WELL. IN SHORT, SUCCESS OF PRESENT PROPOSAL WOULD BE USEFUL PRECEDENT. ON OTHER HAND, EMBASSY DELHI'S PREDICTION OF NEGATIVE GOI REACTION COMES AS LITTLE SURPRISE AND RAISES POSSIBILITY THAT PUSHING ISSUE NOW MIGHT IN FACT SERVE TO MAKE THINGS WORSE FOR NEPAL PROJECT LATER ON. WHILE, ON BALANCE, WE WOULD BE PREPARED FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE TO TAKE THIS CHANCE, WE DEFER TO DACCA AND DELHI WHICH HAVE BIGGER STAKES IN THIS GAME.
EAVES

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